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Finally, suicide, though not a sin, is a weakness and a folly. It is more manly to endure the burdens and responsibilities of life than to desert our station, in panic fright at, perhaps, the very crisis of victory. A man may be vexed with cares, fretted by adversities, and despondent in grief; but who is free from such trials? He must bravely sustain them, and he will find his strength confirmed by the discipline. Have faith in a God loving, omnipotent, and wise. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

SAMUEL YORKE AT LEE.

V.

LANDLORDISM IN FRANCE.

THE world has always been more or less puzzled over the recuperative power displayed by France, and the economists have been pleased to explain it by the existence of an extensive peasant proprietorship, which, they have said, has prevented the monopolization of the soil. In year 1889, when the eyes of the world were fixed upon Paris and her wonderful exposition, the same old question intruded itself upon all thoughtful persons, and the same answer was generally given.

It seemed as if no other solution could explain the relative prosperity of this country, which supports the second largest army and navy of Europe, and carries a grinding tax system with unbowed back. Persons who have not been satisfied with this explanation expected that some of the international congresses held at the French capital during last summer would throw a new light upon the subject. They were not deceived, for there was much discussion of the theme in the congresses on the land and the labor questions. Various estimates were presented, more or less authentic, and out of them all has come a clearer understanding of the relation of the great French republic to national progress. Instead, however, of being a nation of small land-owners, she is proved to be quite the contrary. Figures leave no doubt as to the existence of an oppressive landlordism in France, and make a comparison with the condition of things just after the Revolution a painful study.

One of the greatest reforms of the Revolution was the levying of a good round tax on the lands of the nobility, which comprised a very large portion of the cultivable surface of the nation. The nobles would not use them and would not let any one else use them. A feeling that whatever the nobility possessed should be made to benefit the public was probably with the Revolutionists a stronger reason for taxing these lands than a clear idea of what part land plays in production.

At any rate, the exemption was taken away and the nobles' lands were heavily taxed, and to-day that exemption has practically been restored, immensely to the profit, not of a nobility, but of a later aristocracy that possesses estates which, placed beside those of the ante-Revolution days, would by no means make the present owners blush.

The law of 1790 had fixed the land tax at 300,000,000 francs. If this tax had remained in operation upon the same basis,—that is to say, upon the revenue from the ground,—it would produce to-day more than 1,500,000,000 francs, since the revenue has increased more than five-fold. But the triumphant reaction from the Revolution saw no good in this system. It was opposed to the work of the great physiocrats, Turgot, Quesnay, and others, and haste was made to undo it by throwing the burden of taxation upon labor by means of indirect *impôts* which should be more favorable to the monopolizers of the land. How steadily this was done may be judged from the following table of reductions accorded to landed property by the reactionary governments since 1789 :

Land tax in 1790.....	300,000,000 francs.
Reductions in francs.....	
1797.....	22,000,000.
1798.....	11,000,000.
1799.....	17,000,000.
1801.....	5,000,000.
1802.....	1,500,000.
1804.....	8,500,000.
1805.....	3,000,000.
1819.....	4,000,000.
1821.....	13,500,000.

While the tremendous strides of material progress in the present century have given to the lands an immense value, the taxes they pay annually have fallen to the sum of 120,000,000 francs, a little more than one-third what they were one hundred years ago. As the area of the ground is 50,000,000 hectares, this gives but two or three francs per hectare.

This reduction is not, however, sufficient for the landed proprietors. With the audacity of Oliver Twist, but with none of his inspirational hunger, they demand further exemptions. They have recently actually inaugurated a campaign to give landed estates a complete freedom from taxation. The leader of this movement has been Léon Say, grandson of Jean Baptiste Say, the economist. He is also, it may be remarked in passing, the intimate friend of M. de Rothschild.

An idea of what he is aiming at is furnished by the following incident: He was present not long ago at a great dinner in Paris. Conversation turned upon the revival of the cry of free land in America. "I am doing the same thing here," said M. Say, proudly; "there are too many taxes on our land now; I want to see it free from all taxation."

The system of "progressive liberation," for the full fruition of which M. Say is laboring, has brought about the dominancy of large proprietors. For a long time the contrary was the popular belief; and it may be doubted even now if the French people have abandoned their long-cherished delusion. Ask a Frenchman what makes his country so prosperous—that is, relatively to its continental neighbors—and he will reply that it is the large number of small landed proprietors. This belief has been strengthened by the actual existence of an enormous number of small proprietors. Much prominence has been given to this phase of French life, and it has been the stock theme of about every speech on tax reform in Paris for half a century.

But the trouble with this is that the proprietors are all too small. Put all their possessions together and they would represent only the smallest portion of the general area. The totality of the lands possessed by peasants who cultivate them themselves does not exceed a tenth part of the whole area, or but 5,000,000 hectares.

This fact, so painful to French pride, has just been officially recognized. In a report published last year on the decennial agricultural inquiry from 1872 to 1882, M. Tisserand, director of French agriculture, expresses himself as follows: "But our small cultivators, if they form the immense majority of the landed proprietors are far from cultivating the largest surface of our soil. On the contrary, they occupy but a very small fraction of it. It is, then, an error to believe that the land of France is in the hands of the small cultivators."

Unflinching as this conscientious official is in the face of an unpleasant duty, his words are no more striking than the following figures presented by the Minister of Finance on the question of land-holding in France:

Size of holdings.	Number of land proprietors.	Total area in hectares.	Percentage of number.	Percentage of area.
0 to 2 hectares.....	10,426,368	5,211,456	74.09	10.53
2 to 5 ".....	1,894,847	6,010,847	13.47	12.16
5 hectares and over.....	1,754,305	38,166,001	12.44	77.31
Total liable to taxation...	14,075,520	49,388,304	100.00	100.00

In other words, 75 per cent. of the total number of landed proprietors possess only 10 per cent. of the entire area of the country; 13 per cent. of the number of proprietors own 12 per cent. of the area; 12 per cent. of the total number of proprietors possess 77 per cent. of the total area.

About nine million hectares are occupied by tenant farmers and five million by the *metayer* farmers, who share the harvest with the proprietors. Nearly nineteen million hectares are cultivated by proprietors, or *chefs de culture*, with the aid of salaried workmen and domestics. Then five million hectares are tilled by the peasants themselves, with their wives and children. But there are proprietors owning more than 100,000 hectares devoted to the pleasures of the chase, which pay almost no tax.

Rothschild possesses already more than 200,000 hectares (about 500,000 acres); but he does not wish to cultivate; all is for the chase. When he buys an estate, he demolishes the structures, if there are any, and drives out the inhabitants, and his game devours the harvests of the vicinity.

France has millions of farmers who are crushed by mortgages. The value of these mortgages rises to the enormous figure of 20,000,000,000 francs, or \$4,000,000,000. There are millions of landed proprietors so small that the Minister of Finance preferred to let them go unrecorded, believing that the cost of recording would be greater than the revenue derivable therefrom.

Probably not for many centuries has the surface been more poorly cultivated. Official investigations show that one-third of France is totally uncultivated; another third yields but half harvests, while the third third produces anything at all only under conditions that are positively grinding.

The position of the French Government in regard to taxation is like Paddy's toward heads: when you see any property, tax it. The burden that falls on the agriculturist is enough to discourage cultivation. The more he works and produces, the more extensively is he the victim of the tax collector. With a direct tax on houses, windows, doors, etc., and on all beverages, sugar, tobacco, etc., he is simply going round and round in the same circle of making and paying. This idea struck a French peasant recently, when, worn out by the repeated visits of tax-collectors, he cried: "My God! it seems that I was created for only two things—to make all I can and pay to the government all I can."

So cities grow and the country is deserted. Absenteeism prevails here as much as and more than in England. The emigration from the country toward the cities and the industrial centres grows from year to year; the great estates are causing the void in the country. Lands are rented no longer except with the greatest trouble; field workers and capital alike shun land, while the industrial workmen wage between themselves a desperate rivalry which lowers salaries to a figure even below what is strictly necessary to repair the laborer's strength and rear his family.

Millions of houses have no windows, and millions have but one. Millions of families eat meat but twice or three times a year, living on chestnuts during many months and on black bread of a detestable quality.

W. E. HICKS.